



from left: Roxana Betrand, Jill Pardini, Garima Bhatt, Shomari Taylor, Campbell McLean, Mayor Rawlings-Blake, Chris Merriam, Phil Garboden, Amanda Gonzalez, Cristina Duncan Evans, Jason Fair, Daniela Martinez

BALTIMORE CITY MAYORAL FELLOWSHIP

Law & Order, Baltimore Edition

Who opens a speech to a roomful of lawyers by telling a lawyer joke? Baltimore Police Commissioner Frederick Bealefeld, III did, as he addressed an audience that included the Baltimore City Mayoral Fellows Wednesday. The Commissioner's presentation, part of the fellowship's Speakers Series, also featured Marcia Holland, an administrative judge with the Baltimore City Circuit Court and Baltimore City State's Attorney Patricia Jessamy.

"The variety of perspectives on the panel was immensely valuable. Hearing the participants talk about the challenges they face gave me a better understanding of the complexity of the criminal justice system," said Mayoral Fellow Cristina Duncan Evans.

Commissioner Bealefeld's presentation illustrated a dramatic shift in Baltimore policing strategy. Under old logic, he said, increased arrest rates indicated better security. But Baltimore has made great strides in reducing crime even while making "far fewer arrests than we had in 2010." Commissioner Bealefeld concluded with the example of a food packet recently invented to fight global hunger, and he challenged the audience to



EDITION II
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INSIDE:

Mayoral Fellow Profile:
Shomari Taylor

BCMF Alumnus
Sasha Leonhardt: Q&A

Upcoming Events

continued on pg. 4

Mayoral Fellow Profile: Shomari Taylor

“School is the place that determines where you go, whether you end up valuing education or not,” said Mayoral Fellow Shomari Taylor. As a third-year law student, graduate of Yale University, and alumnus of Teach For America, it is clear that Shomari has made academic achievement a priority in his life. “I wanted to be able to influence that for children.”

Shomari’s placement is in the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice where he is spearheading the development of a mentorship program for youth victims of gun violence. This partnership would pair victims of violence with former perpetrators of violence.

“Juvenile violence is a problem in Baltimore city. Each time you read about a youth involved in violence you usually find out they’ve been involved in a ‘street lifestyle’ that put them in position,” said Shomari. “It’s important that kids have role models that grew up in the same neighborhoods as they did. But, made different decisions with their lives.”

Shomari was born in Baltimore but lived in Detroit from first to ninth grade. He returned for high school and then went on to Yale University, where he participated in varsity football and track and field earning All-Ivy and All-East honors in 2005. In 2006, Shomari earned his Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy. Following graduation, Shomari accepted an offer to join Teach For America in New York City “to gain real-world experience.” During his time as the science teacher at an elementary school in the South Bronx, Shomari coached basketball, indoor football, and ran the “VIP Club for Super Scientists ONLY.” In 2008, he completed his Master’s degree in Teaching from Pace University.

Shomari knew returning to Baltimore to attend the University of Maryland School of Law was inevitable. And, plenty of opportunity awaited him in his beloved City. Last summer, after working in the Baltimore Circuit Court, Shomari was drawn to the Baltimore City Mayoral Fellowship “to see the inner-workings of the City and City government.”

When asked about his Fellowship experience so far, Shomari said, “Baltimore is the city I want to live and work in. To see how decisions are made and the efforts put into improving the city first hand is invaluable.”



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Shomari Taylor



Where are they now?

Q & A with a BCMF alumnus!

It's been eight years since the first class of bright, promising young people have gone through the Baltimore City Mayoral Fellowship program. It's time to shed light on some of the dozens of BCMF alumni out there, working to promote positive change for our City and State. Recently, 2010 Mayoral Fellow Amanda Gonzalez had the opportunity to speak with 2004 alumnus, Sasha Leonhardt. "The Mayoral Fellowship," Sasha said, "was one of the most important parts of my education... it gave me a deep understanding and love of Baltimore that remains with me to this day."

Why did you choose to participate in the fellowship?

"Having lived most of my life in Baltimore's suburbs, I wanted a chance to learn a city top-to-bottom, and there was no better city than my hometown. While most fellowships will place a student in a dingy office doing gruntwork that regular employees abhor, the Mayoral Fellowship was a chance to do truly meaningful, high-level work with some of the senior members of Baltimore's government."

Do you feel you made a difference in Baltimore City?

"Absolutely. I was able to draft press releases that later went out for publication, as well as writing updates for city email newsletters and helping to coordinate press activities. Beyond my normal job researching issues for Mayor O'Malley and publicizing the good work he did for the city, I also participated in other projects outside of my office. I helped to coordinate a program under Mayor O'Malley that brought together donated materials, volunteer labor, and city employees to revitalize Baltimore City Schools."

What was the most important lesson you learned from your experiences as a Mayoral Fellow?

"More than any other level of government, local government touches individual people every day. Potholes in the street, police officers on the corner, taxes, economic development, public health – city government does so much to affect the lives of so many people. Countless students think that Capitol Hill is the only place to make broad changes in government, but there are opportunities to make a real difference at the local level every day."

How have you contributed to our City or State since your fellowship?

"Most of my contributions after the fellowship were on a statewide, rather than local, level. After graduation, I worked on then-Mayor O'Malley's campaign for Governor, where I was Deputy Director for Research and Policy. I then served on the Governor-



Sasha Leonhardt
2004 Baltimore City Mayoral Fellow

Fellowship Placement: Mayor's Office of
Research and Communications

Fellowship Project: Economic Development
Planning for Station North

Degrees:
A.B. Politics, Princeton (2005)
J.D. Duke University School of Law (2010)

Current Employer/Occupation:
Student, studying for the Maryland Bar Exam



Law continued from pg. 1

work hard and find the next big problem-solving idea like it.

“I found his views to be very persuasive,” said Chris Merriam, another Fellow. “I thought that the fact that Commissioner Bealefeld, Judge Holland, and Ms. Jessamy appeared together at this event was a good sign for the city.”

State’s Attorney Patricia Jessamy was next on the agenda at the luncheon, generously hosted by DLA Piper at the firm’s Mount Washington office. State’s Attorney Jessamy, who has led the city’s prosecution efforts since 1995, described her office’s multi-pronged approach to crime, including prevention efforts as well as law enforcement. The final presentation was from Circuit Court Judge Marcia Holland, who highlighted her office’s 102% clearance rate that is gradually resolving a crucial backlog of cases. Judge Holland concluded with praise for Family Court as a highly important department and the three speakers took questions from the audience.

UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY 14th
Speaker Series: Rachel Garbow
Monroe from the Weinberg
Foundation

JULY 16th
Service Event: Artscape



Alumnus continued from pg. 3

Elect’s transition team, drafting policy on the environment, natural resources, and information technology. After the inauguration, I was appointed Deputy Press Secretary to the Governor. Because of my experience as a Mayoral Fellow, I was better able to understand how the City and State interact – both in politics and policy – and it was a great advantage to have that background.”

Do you have a vision for Baltimore City?

“Land is a finite – and valuable – resource, but for too long, people have written-off important neighborhoods in Baltimore. As the area’s population increases, and we become more concerned about the environmental costs of transportation, more and more people will look for ways to reclaim urban land. I hope that, as time passes, people see the opportunities in these neighborhoods and invest in them – with their time, their money, and their residence. We are seeing this happen now, with the continued growth of the area around the south side of the Baltimore Harbor, as well as Harbor East, and the Westside development. I hope that this trend continues – without excessive gentrification – and Baltimore can reclaim this land and reach its potential.”

Do you have any advice for current or future Mayoral Fellows?

“It’s a cliché, but you will only get out of the fellowship what you put into it. I always felt that the purpose of the fellowship was to get real-world experience working with City government, and the best way to learn is by doing.”

NEWSLETTER STAFF

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